



# FIND SUPPORT

TOOLKIT TWO

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This kit is part two on your journey to change school food. Here you will find general information about making your case for change and building a network of support to help make it happen.

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### **1) FIND YOUR ALLIES AMONG PARENTS**

As a lone parent, asking for change is going to be tough. Find three or four other parents who really care about this issue and are prepared to work with you and get involved. Ask them to help you create a school lunch committee.

- Talk to interested parents, and collect their names and contact information.
- Set a time and place for your first meeting and email everyone who indicated interest.
- Announce the new committee and first meeting at PTA or other school gatherings.
- Post flyers around the school and tell everyone in your school newsletter.

### **2) FIND YOUR ALLIES WITHIN STAFF AND DECISION MAKERS**

As you get started making change, remember that school lunch is a complex program, involving large agencies like USDA and unions, and lots of regulations. Even if your cafeteria staff and administration support making change, they will still hit roadblocks that as parents, you may not even have known existed. The Nutrition Services staff at your school is your committee's first ally and your most powerful weapon for change. Be sure to collaborate with them from the beginning.

- Be prepared with the results from your audit and notes from eating in the cafeteria.
- Explain that you have a group of concerned parents who want to change school food.
- Determine the administration's agenda and let them know you are there to support and help them help the kids.

### **3) MEET YOUR LUNCH LADIES**

Get to know your food service staff and ask them how you can help.

- Learn more about how they work and what they would like to see changed (or not).
- Find out what equipment they would need to make changes in the kitchen. It could be something as small as a blender or food processor, or as large as new ovens or more refrigerator space.
- Ask if they would like some refresher training in kitchen skills. A change in food can mean new or forgotten techniques and it gives a boost to their confidence. It will also help them promote new items to the kids.

### **4) SPEAK AT THE NEXT PTA MEETING**

Not everyone, parents and administration alike, will want to change the current system. This may be due to a lack of knowledge about what is really happening in the cafeteria, inertia, fear, apathy or a combination of all of these things. It is up to you and your committee to present the case for change. Use our Parents Bill of Rights for Better School Meals to introduce the issue.

- It provides basic information about the new USDA regulations for school meals. The new standards will give you the right to ask for better food in your child's school, and is ideal for presenting at a PTA or School Board meeting.
- Talk about the results of your audit or observations in the school cafeteria. Add your own pictures or data.
- Ask for support and volunteers. Get email addresses and set up an email group.

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### **5) PRESENT TO YOUR SCHOOL BOARD**

- Get food on the agenda for the next meeting.
- Ask your school nutrition director for help to prepare, and get their advice on the things which they need support changing from the operational side.
- Use the same Parents Bill of Rights as at the PTA meeting to show the School Board you are serious.

### **6) PRESENT TO THE STUDENT COUNCIL**

The students of your local school are often the strongest and most convincing advocates for change. It is important that you approach them early in the process and get them on board to help with your campaign.

- Ask the student council if you can come in and have a conversation with them.
- Get contact information of students interested in changing the school food.

### **7) FIND EXTERNAL ADVISORS**

- Ask a couple of local health experts to lend their support – a pediatrician, dietitian, the school nurse. They will be able to provide an independent voice of authority on the importance of good nutrition for child health and talk about the kind of problems arising from child obesity and poor diet that they have to deal with.
- Invite local chefs to support you as well. They are strong advocates for better food values and can explain the importance of from-scratch cooking over processed meals.

#### **ASSOCIATED SUPPORT TOOLS:**

School Lunch Background

Decision Makers in School Food

School Lunch Audit

Parent Bill of Rights for Better School Meals